



Small Business Advocacy Council  
June 21, 2016 8:30 a.m.  
Commerce RI  
315 Iron Horse Way  
Providence, Rhode Island

Attendance:

Lt. Governor Daniel J. McKee  
Manuel Batlle, RISBDC  
Stephen Boyle, Cranston Chamber of  
Commerce  
Sherri Carrera, Commerce RI  
Ralph Coppola, Meridian  
Mark Deion, Deion Assoc.  
Maureen Ewing, Secretary of State's  
Office  
Gary Ezowski, Lincoln Environmental  
Properties  
Mary Gervais, CWE  
John Gregory, Northern Rhode Island  
Chamber

Ed Huttenhower, RISBDC  
Steve Maciel, Discover RI Campaign  
Ed Mazze, URI  
Don Nokes, NetCenergy  
Andrea Palagi, Lt. Governor's Office  
Janet Raymond, Greater Providence  
Chamber of Commerce  
Nancy Scarduzio, DOA/ORR  
Tony Silva, Lt. Governor's Office  
Cap Willey, CB Tofias  
Melissa Travis, Health Source RI  
Bud Violet, Ocean State BDA

I. Call to Order

- Meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Daniel McKee at 8:40 a.m.
- Lt. Governor McKee gives an overview of the 20-25 businesses he's visited since the last SBAC meeting. One of the businesses is National Marker Company in North Smithfield. NMC produces safety signage for companies and organizations across the country. Right now, their goal is to provide the state with some of its signage and to make a business connection with CVS. Lt. Governor McKee suggests that Sherri Carrera and the Lt. Governor's Office work together to connect this business with CVS. He also encourages

all members to suggest businesses that may benefit from a visit from the Lt. Governor's Office.

- Lt. Governor McKee introduces Andrea Palagi, the newest addition to the Lt. Governor's Office who will be taking lead on communications in Erika Niedowski's absence.

## II. Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from the March meeting were approved by the council at 8:45 a.m.

## III. Commerce RI Update

- Sherri Carrera gives an update of Commerce RI's client services. In total, they've met with 2,500 businesses, participated in over 100 speaking engagements, visited with all the chambers, started business incubator roundtables and launched a statewide action team.
- The Agency Cross Training meetings have also been incredibly successful. Representatives from 16 state agencies have been meeting monthly. Currently, the group is doing a mock licensing activity, trying to map out the process of starting a business in Rhode Island.
- Sherri Carrera also encourages all members to support the spa re-opening after a fire at 422 Main Street in Wakefield.
- There is a new initiative between Commerce RI and Rhode Island Emergency Management. Commerce RI now has a seat in the emergency center—Sherri Carrera is managing this operation. This new arrangement allows Commerce RI to be the conduit between businesses and the state in a state of emergency.
- Darin Early from Commerce RI notes that Commerce is pleased with what they've seen to date in client services. He notes that the secret ingredient to all of this is the ACT group which provides wonderful peer to peer sharing. He notes the importance of highlighting how all agencies fit together so we can get everyone moving at the speed of business to help move Rhode Island forward.
- Lt. Governor McKee thanks Commerce for all their small business efforts and for keeping all agencies connected.

## IV. Old Business

## V. SBAC Statute Committee Update

- Lt. Governor McKee calls on Melissa Travis to give an update on the statute working group meetings.

- Melissa Travis notes that there have been three meetings of a small group of council members to review the SBAC statute. The main focus is to figure out how to get the small business community to participate in SBAC meetings.
- Doug Giron, the lawyer who has been consulting on statute changes, notes that the statute is from 1985 and is very outdated in terms of who is appointed and how they are appointed. He notes that the goal is to gather input from the group on possible areas of change, to create a draft and then present it to the full council.
- Mark Deion notes that there will be some politics involved in terms of who appoints who and that the group does not want to get involved with that. He adds that right now, the statute is too open. The current consensus is to revise the statute in a way that puts the Lt. Governor at the head of the efforts of the group—he will be the champion of small businesses.
- Lt. Governor McKee notes that it's taken a little while to get things settled, but the council will keep moving forward. He adds that there are a lot of inactive appointments in the current statute and that over the summer a new draft will be produced to submit in the upcoming session. The stronger the council can make the statute on behalf of small businesses, the better the business climate in the state will be. He thanks everyone for their work on revising the statute.

## VI. Energy Issues Update

- Lt. Governor McKee provides an update on the office's work to address energy issues on behalf of small businesses in Rhode Island.
- Several weeks ago, Lt. Governor McKee visited Best Practice Energy, a Rhode Island based company listed as a vendor on the Empower RI website. Best Practice received 100 new clients since the Empower RI website launched—this is great for business in the state.
- Lt. Governor McKee notes that as Ralph Coppola has noted, there aren't too many options for industrial users on the site at the moment. This is an issue the office is looking to address. With the help of Best Practice, a report/profile will be put together to show what is available in terms of energy options for businesses in RI.
- A council member asks if the Empower RI website can be put on National Grid's bills. Lt. Governor McKee notes the request has been made and that his office will check back in.
- A council member asks where the different state offices procure their energy from. Lt. Governor McKee replies that his office will look into it.
- Lt. Governor McKee notes that his office has been in contact with Dunkin Donuts and Navigant Credit Union to look at ways to multiply the effects of Empower RI on a large scale.

- John Gregory notes that it is great to see Macky McCleary moving over to the PUC adding that he will be an excellent fit for that position. Lt. Governor McKee agrees.

## VII. Education Breakfast Recap

- Lt. Governor McKee gives the council a recap of his current education initiative. In February, he convened a group of 30 people, in April a group of 60, and just a few weeks ago, a group of 100. The purpose of these meetings is to grow a strong and diverse Rhode Island support base for the Lt. Governor's education moonshot: to boost Rhode Island student achievement levels to meet or exceed Massachusetts by 2021. If Rhode Island can meet those achievement levels, it will be worth \$40 million in earning power a month in the state. The next step is to have a series of focus groups and to work with a company to create a comprehensive report to back up the moonshot. Once the report is created, the Lt. Governor's Office will be taking it on tour in Rhode Island—to businesses, churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. If anyone on the council knows an organization that would like to host, please let the Lt. Governor's Office know.
- Melissa Travis notes that RIPEC launched a very informative study on what happened with education in Massachusetts. She adds that for this to work in Rhode Island, the business and education community have to go hand in hand.
- Dr. Edward Mazze notes that he, and everyone in the room, spends a lot of times in meetings. He feels as if the Lt. Governor's meeting was one of the few that you walk out of feeling like you've actually learned something. He adds that the Lt. Governor put together a great panel of guests that kept everyone interested and engaged—it was one of the best meetings he's been to in Rhode Island. He adds that k-12 education is the most important piece of the puzzle.
- Stephen Boyle asks if the legislation that empowers Rhode Island principals was passed, noting that it would jumpstart the Lt. Governor's initiative. A council member responds that it was passed but does not give the principals the power to fire teachers.
- Lt. Governor McKee notes that he wants the work of this initiative to come from a group that is diverse and inclusive. He thanks everyone who has participated so far.
- Lt. Governor McKee introduces special guest Secretary of State, Nellie Gorbea.
- Secretary Gorbea notes that this session resulted in a lot of regulatory relief including a complete restructuring of administrative procedures which will bring about an easy-access electronic web base of state regulations. All regulations will have to be submitted into this web base in a clear way—if

they're not submitted by the cutoff date, they disappear. This will help Rhode Island eliminate outdated rules that are holding the state back. A key piece of this initiative is giving people information they can understand. Secretary Gorbea notes that Rhode Islanders shouldn't have to go to a lawyer to understand the state's business regulations. She also adds that the Secretary of State's Office has begun a voluntary data collection process which includes asking for a few more pieces of information on annual reports—3 additional questions. This will allow the Secretary of State's Office to provide businesses and the state with trend data on what kind of businesses are starting in Rhode Island.

- A council member asks what the submittal deadline is for regulations on the new web base. Secretary Gorbea notes that she can get that information to the group.
- A council member asks if data for the number of monthly startups and shut downs can be included on this web base. The member also asks if it is true there will be new voting machines in Rhode Island. Secretary Gorbea notes that such information will be included and that there is a pilot program for tablet use in process. She adds that her office has also gotten lobby reform passed making Rhode Island home of the most transparent lobby laws in the U.S.
- Dr. Edward Mazze asks if the Secretary's office keeps a record of how long each Rhode Island startup has been in business as a way to identify how many startups survive with each passing year. Secretary Gorbea notes that all that information is current in her office's database. Right now, the office is working on making that information more accessible.
- Mark Deion adds that being able to see the balance of how many startups open and fail is critical.
- Dr. Edward Mazze raises the issue of the underground economy as something the Secretary of State's Office should be aware of adding that there are many businesses in the state that may not be registered. He adds that this is something very difficult to tackle but is good to consider.
- Secretary Gorbea thanks Lt. Governor McKee for giving her space in this meeting.

#### VIII. Entrepreneurship with RI Student Population

- Lt. Governor McKee notes that there are no updates at this time.

#### IX. New Business

##### a. Business Visits

- Lt. Governor McKee notes that this was addressed in the beginning of the meeting.

#### X. Announcements/Public Comment

- Lt. Governor McKee introduces special guest Steve Maciel who works for Independent Media Company and runs a hunger association to support Rhode Island food banks.
- Steve Maciel shares about his work with the Discover RI Campaign. He, along with a group of business owners, is proposing a private sector plan to boost the economy that involves rallying the business community around the Discover RI Campaign to drive consumer traffic and occupancy rates. The goal of this campaign is to create a greater demand for services and products in Rhode Island to create more revenue. He is here today as a representative of a group of South County business owners who want to have a timetable of the statewide marketing plan so they can get behind it in a coordinated manner.
- Lt. Governor McKee asks Commerce RI if there is a timeframe for a statewide marketing campaign. He adds that many of the state's small businesses want to compliment the statewide initiative, but they need the timeline to do it right.
- Darin Early notes that there isn't a specific date. Commerce RI is currently leveraging off content from the make it yours campaign—tourism bureaus have been involved with that process. The plan right now is to have something launched late summer into the fall.
- Lt. Governor McKee notes that what he heard when he met with this group of South County businesses, is that they really want to rally behind a statewide marketing effort but they need to know when it's going to be laid out. They want to be supportive of the state, but at the same time, they're frustrated with the false start.
- John Gregory notes that there are many organizations/parts of Rhode Island all trying to do the same thing at the same time. He adds, we'd be stronger together.
- Darin Early notes that from a tourism standpoint, there is a business attraction piece to be woven into the statewide marketing plan. Liz Tanner from Commerce RI is going around to groups like Steven Maciel's to spread the word.
- Melissa Travis asks the Lt. Governor for an update on Inner City Capital Connections. Lt. Governor McKee notes that his office hasn't heard back yet but he will get that information out.

#### XI. Closing Remarks

- There are no closing remarks at this time.

XII. Adjournment

- A motion to adjourn was made by John Gregory and seconded by Melissa Travis. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Palagi  
Policy & Administrative Aide  
Office of Lt. Governor Daniel J. McKee